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ABSTRACT

Relationships among campus psychological climate, gender ratios, and incidence of sexual harassment were investigated to determine whether harassment within an institution could be related to the psychological climate of individual departments and to the gender ratios of women to men students, faculty, and full professors. Gender harassment, such as suggestive classroom joking or sex role stereotyping of students by the instructor, is not necessarily intended to elicit sexual cooperation but conveys sexist attitudes. Sexualized harassment, by contrast, includes more coercive forms of sexual advances. A 32-item questionnaire concerning sexual harassment was mailed to 10,500 students in a public university in the Northeast. Gender harassment occurred more frequently in departments where faculty hold gender-based expectations of students and decreased as percentages of women increased. It was negatively correlated with support for women's professional development and with general respect for students. Respectful faculty behaviors such as complimenting students and being sensitive to outside family obligations characterize departments with less harassment. Harassment is influenced by the climate of the student's major department which either tolerates or discourages it by virtue of group norms or values. The climate of the major department is influenced by the culture of the larger institution. Because of the difficulties of obtaining an adequate sample, the relationship between sexualized harassment and climate factors was impossible to determine. (MSF)

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CAMPUS SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND DEPARTMENTAL CLIMATE

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INTRODUCTION

There has been much documentation of sexual harassment of women on college campuses (e.g., Dzeich & Weiner, 1984; Fitzgerald, Weitzman, Gold, & Omerod, 1988; Paludi, 1991; Till, 1980). Much of the research in academia has focused on individuals who have already been harassed or on assessing levels of incidence. This research has generated important information regarding the nature and forms of sexual harassment. For example, a consistent finding is that there are two types of sexual harassment, related yet distinct: gender harassment and what has been called "quid pro quo" harassment (Bond, 1988; Fitzgerald, 1991; Fitzgerald & Hesson-McInnis, 1989; MacKinnon, 1979). Gender harassment refers to generalized sexist remarks and behavior not necessarily designed to elicit sexual cooperation but which convey degrading and sexist attitudes based on gender. Such harassment constitutes a hostile environment for women. Sexualized harassment, which includes "quid pro quo" harassment, refers to more coercive and imposed forms of unwanted and inappropriate sexual advances from unwanted flirtation to more direct pressure or force through bribes, threats or actual physical assault (See also EEOC Definition, EEOC, 1980).

The above research has contributed greatly to our understanding of the complex forms and devastating consequences of

sexual harassment. It is important, however, that we broaden our focus and move beyond individual analyses and the documentation of incidence to focus on group level factors. By shifting our focus to the surrounding group or organizational context, it is possible to investigate the ecological correlates of sexual harassment and to see whether there are contextual elements or characteristics that are likely to lead to the occurrence of harassment. Such information sets the stage for the design of preventive interventions by providing direction for setting-based interventions and for the development of programs and policies. Shifting from the person or individual level to the group level also discourages very real tendencies to inadvertently blame the victims of harassment for that harassment.

Organizational Climate and Chilly Classroom Climate

The concepts of organizational culture and climate fit well with an ecological focus. Organizational culture refers to the pattern of basic assumptions about human behavior and interactions within a setting (Schein, 1985). It includes collectively held beliefs, values and expectations about how people should treat each other and how they should regard one another, and is reflected in the language, rituals and styles of communication adopted (Kanter, 1977; Schein, 1985). Organizational climate can be considered a surface manifestation of culture which is more easily measured than culture itself (Schein, 1990).

Of particular relevance in understanding sexual harassment in educational settings is what Hall and Sandler (1982) have called the "chilly climate" in the classroom. This refers to accepted ways of operating such as examples used to illustrate concepts, jokes initiated or condoned by an instructor, a teacher's subtle non-verbal messages to girls versus boys, or who is called on. Generally, the "chilly climate" refers to ways that girls are ignored or discouraged in the classroom. A major study sponsored by the American Association of University Women released recently concluded that girls are "short changed" in educational settings and calls for dramatic changes in teaching practices and culture in educational settings (AAUW, 1992).

Broadening the concept of "chilly climate" to include norms and experiences that occur outside the classroom for higher education settings is appropriate because many student interactions with faculty occur outside the classroom. Further, while gender-stratified attitudes and norms may be related to incidence of sexual harassment, other aspects of the academic environment or climate are also likely to be important. Respect for individuals regardless of gender and support for diversity of various kinds are consistent with discouraging sexual harassment and encouraging gender and other forms of equity (Bond, in press; Fuehrer & Schilling, 1985; 1988).

Gender Ratios

Generally, the presence of women, especially in positions of power, is likely to discourage sexist and demeaning treatment of women, including sexual harassment (Bond, in press; Gutek, 1985). A study of Fortune 500 companies concluded that complaints of sexual harassment were twice as high in companies where women constituted only a minority as they were in companies where women were a majority (Sandroff, 1988). We know, however, that the relationship of gender ratio to levels of sexual harassment is complex. It appears, for example, that women are at less risk of harassment in settings where they compose a very small minority than they are in settings where they constitute a higher percentage--while still a minority--or in settings where a small minority is increasing, thus representing a threat to the status quo (Bond, in press; Kanter, 1977; Gruber & Bjorn, 1982; Gutek & Morasch, 1982).

Other institutional factors likely to be related to gender composition, but different from it, are also important. For example, a work setting that historically excluded women is not only likely to have a highly skewed gender ratio, but also likely to have a male culture and to limit women's access to power and resources. Each of these factors may increase risk for women. LaFontaine and Tredeau (1986) found that women in some male-dominated professions, including engineering and management, are at greater risk of harassment than are women in traditionally

female professions. While the relationship between gender ratio and sexual harassment has been investigated even less in academic than in employment settings, there is some evidence that gender composition and traditions play roles here, too. For example, Till (1980) found that women are at increased risk of sexual harassment in academic disciplines that have traditionally been male-dominated.

Current Research: Department as Context

In this study, we investigate relationships between aspects of climate, gender ratios and the incidence of gender harassment and sexualized harassment. The present research is part of a larger, University-wide study that investigated sexual harassment. The study found that women students reported higher rates of harassment than did men students across all forms of harassment. Gender differences increased with the severity of the incidents. The great majority of the perpetrators reported were men, including male faculty, administrators and staff (Bond, Mandell & Mulvey, 1991; Mulvey, Bond & Mandell, 1991). Our findings parallel those of studies conducted in other academic settings (Fitzgerald et al., 1988a; Paludi, 1991).

In earlier analyses (Bond, Mandell & Mulvey, 1992) presented last year at the Eastern Psychological Association Meetings, we described a multi-level investigation that looked at differences between colleges within the university with respect to both climate

and incidence. These findings were important because they revealed climate differences across colleges and found relationships between sexual harassment and climate.

We feared, however, that we were losing information by aggregating at such a macro level. Students spend most of their time in department-based settings rather than settings that bring together members of the college. Departments are likely to vary considerably even within a given college. Thus, department climate would be a more finely tuned and sensitive measure than college climate. Department climate is also the one most likely to affect students. For these reasons, we focused the present study on aspects of the department that might set the stage for harassment.

We expected to find that both gender harassment and sexualized harassment would vary with aspects of departmental climate and with gender composition. Departments with climates that value respect and tolerate differences, including the valuing of characteristics traditionally associated with women, were expected to be associated with lower levels of sexual harassment. Departments that reflect intolerance, that discourage diversity, or that devalue stereotypically feminine traits and roles were expected to be associated with higher levels of harassment. Departments that value or foster women's professional development were expected to be associated with lower levels of sexual harassment than departments that devalue or discourage women's professional

development.

Departments that are composed of a high percentage of women relative to men were expected to be associated with lower levels of sexual harassment. Higher proportions of women, regardless of role, lessen the likelihood gender will be a salient or distinctive characteristic and increase the possibility that other characteristics like work-related skills and competencies will be important (Gutek, 1985). Patterns were also expected to be influenced by power and status relationships in departments. The higher the percentage of women in powerful positions (i.e., Full Professors), the lower the expected levels of sexual harassment. We expected less harassment with higher percentages of women in positions of authority due to the assumption that such climates would value women and things associated with women.

The Research Process: A Cautionary Note

While there are conceptually sound and compelling reasons for conducting the sort of group-level analysis we embarked upon, it is important to note that such research is more difficult than individual level research. Complicated methodological issues arose in the process of this project. In some ways, these challenges are of as much interest as the findings themselves. We identify some of these issues as we describe our method and results; we explore them further in the discussion. These methodological challenges should be considered in interpreting the meaning of our results.

They may also explain--or at least help to understand--why research on sexual harassment and other complex social issues is more often done using acontextual, individualistic approaches than using systemic or ecological approaches, even though the latter open up possibilities for group-level intervention and deeper social change.

METHOD

A questionnaire concerning sexual harassment was mailed to the entire student body (N=10,500) of a public University in the Northeast. Recipients included all students: both male and female, as well as graduates and undergraduates. The questionnaire inquired as to individual student characteristics such as age, major and residence. The survey also investigated the academic climate of the student's major department. Climate items were intended to measure the students' perceptions of the faculty in their major department. These questions did not address the behavior of particular faculty members, but rather asked participants to generalize about the faculty of a single department as a whole. The climate scale contained 32 items, with each item scored on the basis of 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly). Scale items measured such factors as unity among faculty and students, department-wide activities, faculty respect for students, student workload,

gender stereotyping and coverage of women's issues in the curriculum. Several examples of these items are shown in Table 1.

The questionnaire also asked about experiences of various types of sexual harassment, including gender discrimination, seductive behavior, bribes, threats, and coercive behavior (Fitzgerald, 1991). Unlike the climate items, which were general in nature, these items were behaviorally-oriented and very specific. That is, they inquired as to whether a student had actually experienced a particular behavior. For example, one incidence item read "Have you ever been in a situation where a faculty member directly offered you some sort of reward for being socially or sexually cooperative?" Further details of the questionnaire construction and distribution were presented in earlier work (Mandell, Mulvey & Bond, 1991).

The purpose of the present analysis was to see whether the incidence of sexual harassment within an academic department could be related to the psychological climate of that department and to the gender-ratios of women to men students, women to men faculty and women to men full professors. To this end, the women undergraduate participants' responses were summarized by department, and a correlational analysis using the largest departments was

performed to assess the relation between harassment incidence and perceived department climate and departmental gender ratios.

The decision to use only the women undergraduates is one that warrants some discussion. There is a growing body of research and theory suggesting that key aspects of communication and fundamental values are stratified along gender lines (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Henley, 1977; Tannen, 1990). Reactions to the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings and the Navy's Tailhook scandal dramatically revealed gender polarization regarding sexual harassment in particular. Women generally consider sexual harassment to be more serious than do men, and women are more likely than men to notice and be offended by forms of both gender harassment and quid quo pro harassment (Koenig & Ryan, 1986; Paludi, 1991). For these reasons, the experiences and perceptions of women reporting sexual harassment are likely to differ from those of men. Thus, to provide a straightforward analysis of the relations between harassment and other departmental characteristics, it seemed desireable to restrict our analyses to women students. Similarly, we reasoned the nature of faculty-student interactions differed so greatly for graduate and undergraduate students, that it would be

preferable to restrict the analysis to only the undergraduate population.

RESULTS

Approximately 2800 (27%) of the questionnaires were returned. Using the entire pool of undergraduate responses (n=2000), the climate variables were collapsed into a discrete set of orthogonal factors. A factor analysis, followed by a skree test, indicated that three factors accounted for most of the variance in the climate data. There were gender stereotyping, generalized student respect, and support for women's professional development. A similar factor analysis of harassment incidence led to the extraction of four factors, gender harassment, seductive behavior, sexual threats or bribes, and sexual coercion. For the purposes of the present analyses, the last three categories were collapsed into one (referred to as sexualized harassment) because of the relatively low rates of incidence for some categories. There is also support from other studies for considering gender harassment and sexualized harassment (including the continuum of seductive to coercive behavior) as separate dimensions (Bond, 1988; Fitzgerald & Hesson-McInnis, 1989).

Analyses were then performed to see whether any of the objective departmental characteristics (gender ratios) or

the climate characteristics (gender stereotyping, respect for students, and women's professional development) were correlated with incidence of gender harassment or sexualized harassment.

At this juncture, it is important to highlight the difference between gender-stereotyping (a climate variable) and gender-harassment (an incidence variable). Not only are the former items more general than the latter ones, but they differed as to content as well. Gender stereotyping refers to the expression of derogatory beliefs about women, primarily in an academic context. An example of gender stereotyping is "faculty expect men students to have better math skills than women students." In contrast, gender harassment, although not obviously designed to elicit sexual cooperation, is nonetheless more sexualized in content. An example of gender harassment is "have you ever been in a situation where a faculty member habitually told suggestive stories or offensive jokes."

Before performing these analyses, the subject pool was restricted to those departments that had more than 20 women respondents and more than 50 respondents in all. This limited the pool to 10 departments, with a total of 520 respondents. Mean scores for each of the climate variables, based on the women's responses, were obtained for each

department. In addition, the proportion of women who reported experiencing at least one incident of either type of harassment by a faculty member in their major department was obtained, and, lastly, the gender-ratios of students, full-time faculty and full professors were obtained for each department. These summary variables are shown in Table 2.

Analyses of variance on the three principle climate factors (gender stereotyping, women's professional development and respect) showed that there were significant differences in each of these climate factors among departments. For gender stereotyping, $F(9,510)=5.45$, $p<.0001$; for respect, gender stereotyping, $F(9,510)=4.69$, $p<.0001$; for women's professional development, $F(9,510)=6.01$, $p<.0001$. Results of a chi square test indicated that rates of gender harassment differed significantly by department as well ($X2(9) = 22.626$, $p<.01$). As indicated above, when broken down by department, the absolute rates of sexualized harassment were quite low. It was not appropriate, therefore, to conduct a comparable analysis on this second cluster of sexual harassment behaviors.

Given that department means did differ significantly with respect to climate and gender harassment, the relationships between climate differences, department gender-ratios, and harassment incidence were examined. The

results of these analyses are shown in Table 3. Incidence of gender harassment was found to be significantly correlated with all three departmental climate factors -- positively correlated with gender stereotyping ($r(9)= .88$, $p< .001$), and negatively correlated with support for women's professional development ($r(9)=-.78, p<.01$) and with general respect for students ($r(9)= -.71, p<.02$). It was negatively correlated with the proportion of women students in the major ($r(9)=-.84, p<.01$), the proportion of women faculty ($r(9)=-.73, p<.02$), and the proportion of women full professors ($r(9)=-.83, p<.01$).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study raise two equally important but very different types of issues. First, the correlational analyses reveal a strong relationship between the incidence of gender harassment and multiple aspects of organizational climate. Second, the attempt to correlate sexualized harassment and climate raises methodological issues related to the difficulty of working with setting-level variables. Each issue will be discussed separately below.

Gender Harassment and Departmental Climate

Gender harassment or "hostile environment" harassment appears to be greater in departments where faculty express

gender-based expectations of students' styles, interests, and academic performance. It makes sense that there would be a connection. If women are not viewed as legitimate participants in an environment, it may follow that they are treated as sexual objects. Moreover, the fact that rates of gender harassment also increase in settings where there is less support for women's professional development and less respect for students draws our attention to other aspects of climate that appear to play a role in harassment behavior.

Respectful faculty behaviors such as complimenting students, giving students credit for their ideas, not making racist or demeaning comments, and being sensitive to outside family obligations seem to characterize departments with less harassment. The sense that faculty and other students are supportive of women students as developing professionals also characterizes those settings with less harassment. The common thread is that contexts where students are treated as people with potential for growth and development, are also contexts where hostility toward women is not part of the accepted social fabric.

It seems that lack of respect for all students and lack of support for women in particular are part of contexts in which gender harassment is tolerated and thus allowed to become more pervasive. It is as though the underlying

beliefs not just about women but about all those with less power and those who differ from the norm can set the stage for more abusive behavior.

It is also quite interesting to note that those departments with more gender stereotyped expectations, less support for women's professional development, and less general respect for students, are those departments less peopled by women. Gender harassment occurred less frequently as the percentages of women students, full time faculty and full professors increased. When more women were present, and thus presumably affecting the climate of the department, the rates of disrespectful and sexist behavior decreased.

Prevention Implications

These results have important implications for the design of preventive efforts in the academy. While we need strong policies and procedures on all campuses, the existence of written guidelines concerning harassment are not enough. Intervention efforts should also be constructively focused on increasing faculty's general skill in working with students, increasing their ability to simultaneously empathize with and professionally challenge students (i.e., holding students accountable for quality work while also respecting their outside commitments), and

increasing faculty tolerance of diversity (and hopefully increasing appreciation of diversity).

Mechanisms for supporting women's professional development can also be considered preventive measures, e.g., career days with female role models, support groups for women, hiring more women as T.A.'s and R.A.'s. Campus-wide mentoring programs, interdisciplinary women's studies courses, and women's organizations can be resources for these efforts.

The supports for women's professional development need not only come from the departmental faculty, nor be at the expense of support for male students. Fostering a climate where all students and faculty are supported (and avoiding setting up adversarial relations between female and male students) would seem critical. We know from our findings that promoting respect for all students is related to a better environment for women.

The results also point to women's presence as important to the sort of climate changes that will reduce the incidence of harassment on campus. Having more women students, more women faculty and more women in high ranking faculty positions each clearly play a role in producing an environment that is less hostile and more supportive of women. These results point to the advantages of increased

hiring of women in traditionally male departments, and to the benefits of student exposure to interdisciplinary work as a way of balancing skewed ratios in particular departments. Increasing the visibility of women by selecting women as honorary degree recipients and for other prestigious awards would also support these efforts.

Methodological Issues

While the relationship between gender harassment and climate in this study is quite rich, the relationship between sexualized harassment and climate is impossible to assess due to issues that plague many efforts to conduct setting-level analyses.

When an organization becomes the focus or level of analysis, it becomes necessary to obtain information from a large enough number of settings to compare with one another and also to have sufficient participation within each setting to trust the collective description provided. The differences between settings may also be quite subtle and thus demand a larger pool of participants to statistically uncover the differences. It can be quite difficult to identify sufficient settings within an organization that vary significantly on characteristics of interest. Only when in depth information can be provided on a large number of settings, can we confidently conduct setting-level

descriptive or comparative analyses.

The incidence of sexual harassment is a case in point. Consider, for example, that Fitzgerald et al. (1988a) report rates for more coercive forms of sexual harassment to usually be under 10% in academic settings. In a department with 100 people, 50% of whom are women, we would expect no more than 5 women to report sexual harassment. Five women experiencing harassment indicates a problem that should be taken seriously and addressed immediately; however, it is a difficult number to work with statistically. This methodological problem is complicated further when considering departments with very few women students where the <u>percentages</u> of women harassed may be quite high, yet the actual <u>number</u> of women harassed may be very low.

In our study, there were several decision points that appropriately focused our analyses, yet simultaneously limited our numbers. First, we chose to look only at women because, as was discussed above, their experiences of harassment are more prevalent and different from those of men. Then, in order to focus on departmental dynamics, we looked only at incidence of harassment by faculty within students' major departments even though many of the reported incidents were perpetrated by either faculty outside students' departments or by other university staff and

administrators. We further reduced the number of cases in the analyses by focusing only on departments with at least 20 female respondents. The fine tuning that was necessary to make sense out of the data at a departmental level reduced our total numbers of reported harassment incidents so much that the departmental correlations were uninterpretable (i.e., between 0 and 7 women reported the more severe forms of sexual harassment by faculty within their department). Thus, although the methodologically-driven decisions were critical for maintaining the integrity of the information to be used in the analyses, they also preclude meaningful interpretation. These problems are isomorphic to the difficulties encountered in all setting-level analyses.

Conclusion

In sum, factors that set the stage for sexual harassment exist at multiple levels, yet many such factors are difficult to explore. The individuals who experience harassment are undoubtedly influenced by the climate of their major department which either tolerates or, conversely, discourages harassment by virtue of group norms and values. The climate of the major department is undoubtedly influenced by the culture of the larger institution in which the department is embedded.

The relationship between sexualized harassment and climate is less clear. Although methodologically difficult to identify, the correlates and predictors of this type of harassment are particularly important to understand. Seductive, quid pro quo and coercive harassment are real and traumatic, yet are the hardest to confront because they often happen behind closed doors. Whether victims' numbers are large or small, their experience, the culture of their immediate setting as well as the underlying beliefs of the broader institution must be addressed. Lest the words of concern about the difficulties of conducting group-level analyses be confused with minimizing the problem of sexual harassment, we end with a caution against confusing statistical significance with human significance.

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Table 1

SAMPLE CLIMATE ITEMS

Topic	Sample Item
RESPECT	Faculty usually compliment a student who does something well.
	Faculty are sensitive to the outside work obligations of students.
GENDER STEREOTYPING	Faculty expect male students to have better math skills than women students.
	Faculty believe that women should not be working in this field.
SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	How supportive do you feel that faculty are of women's professional development?

Table 2

Number of women undergraduate respondents; mean scores for gender stereotyping, women's professional development, respect; percentage women students, faculty, full-professors; percentage women experiencing gender harassment, sexualized harassment.

Dept	Num R	Gender Ster	Prof Dev	Res- pect	%Wom Stu	%Wom Fac	%Wom Full	%Gen Harr	%Sex Harr
1	46	19.85	10.50	14.87	29	38	0	23.9	8.7
2	129	18.74	11.17	14.78	78	53	50	18.6	5.4
3	20	20.45	9.70	13.65	13	7	0	30.0	10.0
4	28	24.64	9.90	12.25	11	0	0	39.3	3.6
5	66	16.67	10.32	13.39	48	17	33	16.7	1.5
6	68	21.69	9.25	13.34	41	42	0	30.9	4.4
7	34	18.18	10.74	14.62	56	32	22	14.7	5.9
8	59	15.53	12.27	15.24	96	100	100	6.8	0.0
9	23	22.93	8.96	12.96	35	0	0	30.1	0.0
10	47	21.00	10.15	13.26	47	33	33	14.9	2.1

Table 3

Correlations between percentage of incidence of gender harassment and climate variables, gender stereotyping, support for women's professional development and respect, and percentages of women students, faculty and full professors.

Climate Variable	Correlations with Gender Harassment Pearson r	p
Gender stereotyping	.879	<.001
Women's prof.development	-.778	<.01
Respect for students	-.713	<.02
% Women students	-.840	<.01
% Women faculty	-.728	<.02
% Women full professors	-.829	<.01